

"Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the All."

-Gospel of Thomas, Verse 2

To Acya Liang:

When I met you, I had never thought that I could relate to you. I was an antisocial nerd, and you were popular, had a social life, and could actually do things outside of school and home. I had always thought the crisis I was going through was impossible to be had by those who had everything going well in their lives, but I was wrong. No matter how good our lives are, there's no way to prevent the inherent existential dread bubbling up within all of us. I never knew I would've become your friend and discuss all of this with you. It was you who taught me to sympathize with those I had previously thought as ignorant. Moreover, it was you who made me determined to write all my ideas down. I was intending to cry in the darkness forever, but you were the one who made me snap out of it. Yes, there were times where both of us made mistakes in our friendship, but at the end, you're the only person who was willing to listen to what everyone else perceived as ramblings of someone who has gone insane. Thank you for staying with me.

To Andy Weir (author of *The Egg*):

Your short story was the inspiration for my work. I had come up before with the idea that everyone was one consciousness, but your work was what really got me thinking. Yes, it contributed to my nihilistic depression, but in the end I was able to write my thoughts down, on what would be the most optimal thing to do if the Egg Theory were to be the true nature of reality.

Sorry for being a nuisance to you in your emails.

Foreword

Before I tell you my story, here's something to think about.

Life has gotten pretty convenient for us, at least in the First World. We are born, have a happy childhood, go to school, get a job, get married, have children, and leave behind a legacy when we die.

Yet, there are a few questions that are unanswered within our lives, that we all ponder at least once.

Why does existence exist? What is the true nature of existence? Is there a single principle that the entirety of reality stands upon? Is there a creator entity? What is the first cause?

Why does consciousness exist? How does it attach itself to material reality, when it is clearly alien to the material universe? Why is it inside humans? What happens to it after death?

Is there any purpose to life? Will everything we have done in life be wasted after we die? Is there anything we can do that will have value eternally?

Some people brush them away, others turn to religion, and yet others develop depression from the failure to procure an answer, and in extreme cases turn to drug addiction or other damaging lifestyles.

As for me, I have pondered these questions endlessly, both consciously and subconsciously, and I have gotten what I think is as good as an answer I'll ever get, at least for the foreseeable future.

Let me tell you my story of what happened to me two and a half years ago, when I was fourteen.

It is not to be interpreted literally as a divine contact, but a metaphor for my intense contemplation at one point in my life, the one time when I touched the void.

When I was fourteen, when I still had high hopes of achieving my worldly dream,

When I, like many others my age, had wished to pursue wealth and prestige,

Despite knowing the delusional nature of even considering the possibility of me being able to achieve as high of a goal as those around me, who had already set up their connections with others, taken up pursuits beyond what they were instructed in school, and given up their childish way of life,

Despite having isolated myself from everyone I knew, both family and friend, both peer and superior,

Despite being absorbed in my own thoughts and contemplations for the entirety of my days, in complete ignorance of what was happening around me,

I tried, naively, thinking that I could prove my worth to my peers, to acquaint myself with those in my school who also had the same hopes,

Only to realize that they were impossibly different from me, having already prepared their activities and gained connections for several years, while I was still amusing myself with my childhood games and fantasies.

Having been robbed of my illusion, having been robbed of what I thought was the reason and purpose of my life, I consumed a bottle of poison, knowing that there was no point to further strive in vain.

I laid down in bed, and entered sleep much faster than usual, hoping that I could be spared most of the pain of the poison.

I awoke, to my surprise, standing upright. I was in a vast expanse of open space. The ground was covered with shattered planks of burned wood, completely coated with charcoal and ash, and emitting thick fumes of smoke.

I looked down at the ground. It seemed as if the wood littering the abode was once part of a vast structure, destroyed by an explosion or a fire.

By instinct, I realized with a shock that my feet were standing on the jagged fragments of wood. I flinched, but I then realized that I was not feeling any pain from the splinters.

Still hesitating, I took a step. I felt no pain at all.

I then realized that I was surrounded by smoke. By instinct, I tried to hold my breath, but then I realized that I was not breathing. I tried to breathe in, but the sensation of breathing did not come.

I panicked, but the sensation of asphyxiation did not come, either.

I did not know what place I was in. I recalled the description of Limbo, and wondered if that was the state I was experiencing.

I looked around, but I could not see more than a few meters because of the smoke.

I started walking, hoping there would be a change in the scenery. I walked for about a few minutes, and the ground was still covered with broken, burnt wood.

Then, abruptly, I heard a voice call out to me: "Stop."

The voice did not come from in front or behind me, to the left or to the right, from the sky or from the ground. It seemed that my ability to locate the origin of sounds had ceased to function.

Not knowing what to do, I stopped.

Despite knowing that I was not able to breathe, I tried to say: "Who are you?"

To my surprise, the words came out. I was able to speak despite not being able to breathe.

The voice replied: "Sit down."

Forgetting the cognition of questioning, I obeyed. I looked around, and seeing a plank that was relatively undamaged, I sat down on it.

In the air in front of me, white lines began to appear, as if being drawn by an invisible pen onto an invisible sheet of paper. They took the form of a circle inscribed with a pattern I do not remember.

I asked again: "Who are you?"

In response: "Who are you?"

I thought for a moment, then answered: "My name is Arkhos. I am fourteen, or at least I was. I live with my parents and am in my ninth year of schooling. I have good mental ability, but I cannot say the same about my charisma. I had hoped to go to university and work in technology, but I do not think anymore that I can do it. I have a passion for reading and knowledge."

In response: "In the place you were before now, that was you. Right now, who are you?"

I thought again, for a longer time, then said: "I am not sure."

The entity was silent for a few seconds, and then it said "In that case, I do not think you will understand who I am, either."

I asked: "Are you God?"

"Who is the God you speak of?"

"An entity that, according to some, is responsible for the entirety of existence."

"I am indeed responsible, albeit not directly, for the entirety of existence, but I can see that in your mind, you have a very specific image of God, and I will tell you that I am not what it is. You may call me Monad."

Not knowing what to say, I changed the topic. "Where am I?"

"Where do you think you are?"

"I don't know. Is this Limbo?"

"Not the one you're thinking of."

"Where are we then?"

"Watch, and you will understand."

Before I could question the voice, the scene started changing. The debris on the ground and the smoke in the air cleared.

It took me a moment to process the change in scenery. I was sitting on a street bench in the midst of a buzzing city. In all four directions were buildings stretching into the air beyond what I could see. There were people and vehicles coming into and out of view, and people walking into and out of buildings.

I tried to think of a city that looked like the one I was in, but could not think of any.

"What city is this?"

"This is your ideal reality, or should I say, this was your ideal reality. You wished to go into tech as a profession, yes?"

"Yes."

"And why is that?"

I thought for a moment. "For my entire childhood, I had been ridiculed. They say that I am not good at anything, and I wish to disprove them by proving my

ability. Working in tech is a good way to prove ability, as it requires a high degree of mental capacity.”

“That does not explain why the city exists. Think harder.”

“What is this city supposed to mean then?”

“I’ve already said, this is your ideal reality. In your ideal reality, you imagine the world around you to look like this.”

I looked around. The city seemed to be extremely high-tech. The buildings were coated with paint I did not recognize; I did not recognize the models of the cars either. The people’s clothes looked like they were made from a synthetic material.

“Is this the future?”

“It is. And since you cannot figure out why this is your vision, let me tell you: the reason you want to go into tech is because you want to live in the future. You despise the present because of your psychological trauma within it; you hope to live in the future, and by working in tech, always focusing on a computer, you can pretend that you are living in the future.”

“Why the people then? I don’t like people.”

“Look closer.”

I looked at the people, and my eyes fell on one of their faces. To my shock, it was identical to mine. I looked at more of them; everyone I looked at had my face. I looked into the cars; every driver had my face also.

“They are all me?”

“Yes. As for why this is so, there are two reasons. The first is that you despise the people around you because you feel they are different from and do not understand you; thus you desire a world where everyone is the same as you. The second is that you feel as if you are powerless to do things because of your position in life, as a teenager who must obey his parents, a citizen who must obey the law, and a student who must obey his teachers. Thus, in your ideal world, you are everyone, in every position, granting you the power to do anything.”

“What? I don’t have any particular wish to do anything.”

“You say that because that is what comes to the top of your mind. But in your subconscious, there are many things you desire, like the things I have already

mentioned. Together, they form your ideal. Everyone has one, but most people, including you, are unaware of most aspects of it.”

“Why are you teaching me this? What significance does this have?”

“I will show you. Watch.”

Suddenly, the sky was enveloped in a flare. It was as if a nuclear weapon had been used on the city. I could not see anything but the flare for a few seconds, and then the smoke gave way to the landscape that I entered originally. A landscape of smoke and debris, and I was again sitting on a charred plank.

The voice continued: “You are here right now because your ideal had just shattered from the realization that you could never achieve your dream profession. In all fairness, your full ideal, just like that of everyone else, is unrealistic, but you thought that you could realistically achieve a fraction of it by obtaining a job in tech. However, when you realized that you couldn’t, you gave up on the ideal entirely and wiped it from your mind. This is why you tried to take your life.”

“You said “tried”. Does this mean I am not dead?”

“It depends on whether you wish to continue living. However, even if you choose to be brought back, your ideal will still be shattered, and you are bound to attempt to take your life again.”

“What do I do then?”

“I will implant a new ideal into you, to give you a new reason to live.”

“Why don’t you do this to everyone who attempts suicide?”

“Only a very small fraction of suicide attempts are made because of a shattered ideal, like yours. For the rest, they do it because of reasons that are outside of my control, and I cannot help them. Also, not everyone is capable of handling such information. Some do not have the capability to receive anything at all, and unfortunately I will have to leave them to attempt suicide again. Some are able to receive a portion of it, in which case I give as much as I can, and their lives generally become better. For the rarest ones, like you, I am able to give a large fraction of the message.”

“Aren’t you God? Can’t you do anything?”

“I have already said, I am not the “God” that you envision. I will explain it to you later.”

"You also mentioned that you are giving me "a large fraction" of the message. I'm not getting the full message then?"

"No human brain is capable of retaining the full message. Every brain is hindered, but some, like yours, are hindered less, so I am able to give them more information. However, no brain is able to receive everything."

"And this "information" will help me create a new "ideal", right?"

"You are correct. Let's go."

I was in a space I could not describe. It was not that I could see nothing; it was that I was not seeing at all. It was as if I was blind.

Scared, I tried to feel the ground with my feet, but I did not feel anything. In fact, I could not feel my body at all. It was as if my mind was floating in an ocean of nothingness.

Confused, I asked: "Where is this?"

"The highest world. As you call it? Heaven."

"This is heaven?"

"That word is not a perfect description. There are also elements of nirvana that can describe this world."

"This is nirvana? But I can still think and feel emotions here, and I can still talk to you."

"This is because you are not actually in the highest world. You are still able to think and feel emotions because this is merely an emulation of the highest world I have created in order to teach you the true nature of existence. I have only turned off your perceptions; you still have thought and emotion. As for talking with me, you are neither creating nor receiving sound. This conversation is taking place entirely using thoughts."

"So if I go to the highest world, I won't perceive, think, or feel emotions?"

"That is correct. There is no reason to be scared. Firstly, there is no need to perceive, as the purpose of perceiving is obtaining information, and you will already know everything by the point you enter the highest world. The purpose of thought is also to obtain information, and so the previous statement also applies. Finally, the purpose of emotion is to make decisions,

and you will no longer need to decide anything once you enter the highest world.”

“How does this even make sense? What is the point of knowing everything when I no longer feel the emotion of curiosity or desire, and do not process the knowledge through thought?”

“This is one of the parts of the message that I cannot convey to you. No matter how I explain it to you, you will not understand. For your human brain, knowledge is inherently linked to thought and emotion, and no matter how hard you try, you will not be able to imagine knowledge without thought or emotion, as it is outside the capability of your human brain.”

“Fine then. What is the incentive to attain this state, then?”

“What state would you rather be in?”

“If I could be in any state, I would sit alone under a flowering tree, in a meadow in the midst of mist-covered mountains, with a mountain lake below me, the temperature of the air neither warm nor cold, with soothing music playing, and a slight, almost unnoticeable breeze blowing on my face.”

“You want that for the rest of eternity?”

“Why not? Nirvana is about freedom from suffering, right? If I were to be like that for the rest of eternity, I would not suffer.”

“You wish for the scenery you described only because you want peace, and the scenery, to your brain, is a representation of peace. But when your consciousness is liberated from the brain, your concept of peace will no longer require scenery to associate with, but you will be able to have peace by itself.”

“I thought you said I wouldn’t have emotions? Isn’t peace an emotion?”

“It is the lack of emotions. Whenever you are feeling no emotions, you are at peace. Once you have achieved this state, you will be at peace forever.”

Being at peace forever. That’s what I had always wanted.

Just then, I realized something. “What about the others? A lot of people want happiness, not peace. How is this state you speak of going to appeal to them? The ceasing of all conscious activity is not going to be something they will look forward to.”

“Do they really though?”

“What? Surely they do.”

“Think again. They have deluded themselves into thinking that happiness exists.”

“It does not?”

“All happiness is merely the negation of suffering. You are happy when you eat because it negates hunger. You are happy when you sleep because it negates fatigue. Having a family and friends negate loneliness, wealth negates poverty and homelessness, achievement negates irrelevancy, and so forth. The only reason they want these things is for their suffering to cease. However, these things can only prevent their suffering for a short period, while attaining the final state is permanent.”

“How do I prove that?”

“You do not need to prove it to most people; they will not listen regardless of what you say. Look for those who are fed up with the materialistic way of life, and they will understand it intuitively.”

“How?”

“Whatever cause of happiness there is will initially satiate a person, but when they have experienced it for a long time, they will realize that it is vain and meaningless beyond its initial negation of suffering. Just think of how billionaires eventually stop caring about earning money, or how the most popular kids at school eventually stop caring about making friends.”

“These are the extremes.”

“Yes, but one does not necessarily have to have an extreme amount of a certain form of happiness to realize it is worthless. I am just making an example; it happens to everyone who has their needs already fulfilled; I will elaborate more on that later. Although most people ignore the nagging feeling of meaninglessness and push it to the back of their minds, there are a rare few who take heed and seek for meaning and guidance in life. For them, this will make sense intuitively.”

“Alright. What is necessary for me to get to that state then?”

“I was about to explain it to you. Be patient and listen.”

“Okay.”

"You will not understand my answer to your question unless I explain the nature of the universe you live in. To achieve the highest state, you must first escape your universe, and to escape it, you must first understand its nature. Let's start simple. What do you know about your universe's nature?"

"From what I know, there are three components to my universe: time, space, and particles. The basic units of the universe are particles such as leptons, quarks, bosons, and perhaps some more that have not been discovered yet. There are four fundamental forces. Time and space are the mediums for the particles to move around in. There are at least three dimensions of space and one dimension of time."

"Very good. Anything else?"

"Maybe. But I do not have extensive knowledge on either quantum physics or astronomy."

"No, that's not what I'm talking about. Regardless of your knowledge, there should be one thing that is obvious to you that does not fit into your model of the universe."

"What?"

"Can't you already see? In the world we are currently in, there are neither particles nor space, and time is irrelevant. What still exists here?"

"You and me."

"As for me, I do not 'exist', at least not in your conception of 'existence'. However, for the latter part, you are correct. Your consciousness is still here."

"But you said this world is just an emulator, right?"

"Yes. I will tell you this: all of this is taking place within your mind. If you have not guessed already, you are still alive, and you still have a brain back in your home universe, which is why you are still able to think and feel emotions here. However, even if you had neither thought nor emotion, your consciousness would still exist. Let me demonstrate this for you."

I could not describe what happened next. It was as if a switch was flipped. My consciousness, although still existing, went blank, and any thought or emotion I had in the moments before were extinguished as if a flame. I did not react; I could not, for reacting would be a thought, and my thought process had been completely extinguished. I do not know how long it lasted, as my track of time

had been extinguished also. It could have been a microsecond or a million years.

Then, it was as if the flame was relit. I returned to the previous state, the only difference being that I had the memory of the experience.

I asked: "What was that?"

"A demonstration, to show you that your consciousness exists independently of thought and emotion. Of course, the only thing I left on was your memory, as you needed to remember the experience."

"Wait, so you're saying that consciousness is the thing I neglected to say when you asked me to describe the universe?"

"Not exactly. You are still correct. Your consciousness, even when within the universe, bound to it through the brain, is still not a part of the universe. It is alien to the universe, as it did not originally come from it. Let me give you another demonstration."

My sense of sight was restored. I was in what I could only call an "observation room", except that instead of being separated from what I was observing by a two-dimensional transparent barrier, it was as if I was on another three-dimensional plane, with no material barrier, but instead looking "down" at the three-dimensional plane "below" me. I use these words despite the dimension between the space I was in and the space I was looking at not being the vertical dimension, but a new one altogether, which no words developed for use in our three-dimensional universe can describe accurately.

The plane below me had no form, no matter, and no energy. It was completely empty. Although my sense of sight was reactivated, as far as I could see, I saw nothing.

Then Monad said to me: "Watch."

The space below me transformed into an inferno. It was not a fire, but something much more powerful. I did not see anything except for a brilliant, blinding light, uniform throughout the space.

The light was blinding, and I tried to close my eyes, but then I remembered that I did not have eyes in this world.

I asked: "What is this?"

"I am showing you how universes are created."

"I already know this stuff. Everyone with a basic education knows the Big Bang."

"No, that's not what I'm talking about. Be quiet and watch. I am going to activate your conceptual perception."

All of a sudden, a sense I had never experienced before manifested upon me. I've heard a lot of people talk about the "Third Eye", but I never knew what it would be like. This would probably be the closest.

I saw what looked like innumerable black ants crawling from nowhere into the new universe. Each ant emitted what appeared to be a dark cloud. From where the clouds touched the pure light, it dimmed, taking on a contaminated tone. Soon the entirety of the new universe was contaminated by the ants.

Disgusted, I asked: "What does this mean?"

"The contamination you are seeing is by the principle of chaos. Without its interference, the universe would have remained a pure emanation of me. Your world's scientists often wonder why the universe is not uniform; this is the answer: because it was corrupted by the principle of chaos, my shadow."

"So I'm supposed to go up to physicists and straight-up tell them that the universe was created because of a fight between a pure being and a corrupt being? Do you think they would believe me?"

"Stop taking it literally. Stop thinking of the principles as beings, but rather think of them as concepts. You are already well-acquainted with the four basic forces and fundamentals of physics and mathematics; have you wondered where they came from? I will tell you this: there are the principles, the origin of all forces and universes; you can think of them as beings, but ultimately they are concepts."

"I do not understand what you mean by "concepts"."

"You are good at math, are you not?"

"I'm not good enough to win contests, but yes, I am well above average in that regard, so I guess I could say yes."

"Then, I know someone I would like you to talk to, who can explain this in a way that will resonate with you more than if I were to explain it. Let's go."

I was again in a body with senses, in a sitting position. I was sitting on a chair. In front of me was a roundtable with several other chairs placed around it. The space I was in was vast yet finite, and appeared to be some kind of cathedral, with light streaming in from the translucent walls. The entire space inside was filled with many other roundtables, each with chairs placed around them.

I saw, sitting directly opposite of me at the roundtable, was an old man. He appeared to be in his forties or fifties; he still had a full head of hair, but his hair and beard were greying. Despite this, his skin was completely smooth with no wrinkles. He was wearing what appeared to be a robe from medieval Europe.

"Are you Monad?"

"Yes."

"But you just said that you were not a being, but a concept. How come, then, do I see you as a person?"

"I already said, there is someone else who will explain it better."

With a flash of white light, a second person appeared beside the man.

She was a middle-aged woman, perhaps in her late thirties. She was dressed in modern formal attire. In one hand she carried a clipboard; in the other a pen. Under her arm, she carried a calculator. She might as well have been a middle school teacher.

"Ma'am, who are you?"

"I am the principle of knowledge and reason. You may call me Sophia."

"You're the goddess of wisdom?"

"That is a title humans like you have given me. As for the name, it is because you are familiar with mythology that I give this name to you. In truth, I do not have a name or appearance. None of the principles do."

"Then how come I see you as a person?"

"I will need to demonstrate this to you. Here, take it."

She slid the clipboard and pen she was holding across the table. Confused, I caught them with my hands.

"What is your favourite number?"

I took a moment to think. "I don't really have one."

"Let's go with a number you are familiar with. Two raised to the sixteenth power. What is it?"

I had memorized the powers of two a few years ago when I was bored. "Sixty-five thousand, five hundred and thirty-six."

"Represent it using the pen and paper."

I fumbled the pen for a moment. I knew she was trying to stump me, so I considered drawing a geometrical representation of the number. I thought about it for a while, then drew it like this:

A four-dimensional $4 \times 4 \times 4 \times 4$ Rubik's cube, with the component cubes also being four-dimensional $4 \times 4 \times 4 \times 4$ Rubik's cubes.

Foolishly thinking that I had outsmarted the goddess of wisdom, I held out my drawing in front of me.

To my surprise, Sophia only laughed. "I expected you to do it like this. You thought I was expecting you to write down the number '65536'? I know of your rebellious nature. However, it is not a bad thing, as I can actually demonstrate my point better."

She continued: "Whether you represented it using Arabic numerals or geometric patterns does not matter. My point still holds. Your consciousness, when limited via being trapped inside material such as a brain, cannot comprehend principles fully. You will either need a symbol, such as a numeral, or a model, such as the geometric diagram you just drew, to overcome a fraction of the limitations and attain a limited grasp on a principle, such as numbers. However, it is impossible for you to grasp them fully, in their pure form, as you are currently limited by your brain."

"So principles... they're like concepts?"

"Correct. This is why you see me as a person: it is impossible for you to grasp me in my conceptual form. Even words such as "knowledge", "wisdom", and "reason" are only imperfect abstractions of my pure concept. Human language is quite limited in this regard. This is why your mind has decided to portray me as a being, with a body as if a human's. In reality, I have no form."

"Wait, so how are you talking to me?"

"You talk to me all the time."

"What do you mean? This is the first time I've ever seen you."

"You talk to me whenever you are doing math problems for homework. You talk to me whenever you are trying to figure out a logic puzzle. You talk to me whenever you use reason to make a decision."

"But all of these times, it's just my brain's neurons sending signals to each other. I was never interacting with anything like you."

"What is happening right now is also the result of your brain's neurons sending signals to each other. Don't you remember all of this is taking place inside your mind?"

"So I'm imagining all of this? I'm not really interacting with you, then?"

"Your first statement is correct; your second is incorrect."

"What do you mean? How can I be really interacting with you when I'm imagining all of this?"

"As I already said, I am not a being, but rather a concept. Through your brain's activity, you are able to grasp my concept, and therefore interact with me. The image of me is the result of your brain trying to put the concept of me into a physical model. This is why you see me as a teacher: it is the archetype that is the most relevant to my concept."

"So these concepts... principles... how many of you are there?"

"Take a guess."

"I don't know."

"The answer is obvious, isn't it?"

"Let me ask you this: is the number of concepts finite or infinite?"

I thought for a moment. "Infinite. As long as you are allowed to make the concept infinitely complex, they can be infinite in number."

"Yes. And since we principles are the essence of concepts, we are infinite in number also."

"But the most complex concepts are always compounds of simple concepts, just as composite numbers can be factored into prime numbers. Unless there is an infinite number of prime concepts, just like prime numbers?"

She laughed. "There is only one prime concept and one prime principle."

“Monad?”

“Yes, him. The principle of existence. From the principle of existence comes everything.”

“But didn’t he say that there was a concept in opposition to him? The principle of chaos or something?”

Monad interrupted our conversation. “It is better if I take over from here.”

I was in a dark and damp space. There was no light at all. There were faint sounds of water dripping, barely audible.

Just then, my ears picked up a noise of something extremely large slithering, as if a great snake, in the distance. I was about to cry out, but a hand covered itself against my mouth.

“Be quiet.”

“Monad, is that you?”

“Yes. Now, only whisper.”

I complied. “Where are we?”

“You can see for yourself.” He handed me something stick-like and waxy. I heard him snap his fingers, and I could see I was holding a candle, which he had just lit.

I was in a cavern, surrounded with rock as far as I could see. The light of the candle did not reach very far, and I couldn’t see what was making the slithering sound, so I decided to ask Monad.

“Can you hear the noise?”

“Of course. Follow me.”

We walked for a few minutes, then he crouched against a hole in the wall.

“Point your candle at the hole.”

On the other side, there was a vast chamber. At first, I could only tell that there was something moving, and then my eyes adjusted to the lighting and I could make out a sort of creature. It was a gigantic snake, but with the head of

a lion. It slithered along the chamber's floor, producing the same black cloud I saw around the ants that crawled into the new universe in the previous vision.

"Is that the principle of chaos?"

"Yes."

"Why does it exist? Sophia said that all principles came from you. Did this thing come from you as well?"

"Of course. It's my shadow."

"What do you mean?"

"Think of it this way. Why do you think I exist?"

This was harder than any question the two had asked me up until this point. I thought for about a minute before saying:

"You shouldn't. By all logic, there is nothing which you came from, nothing you originated in, and nothing that created you. There is no logical reason for you to exist."

He chuckled. "You have forgotten that logic comes from me also. You even had a chat with her just a while ago."

I was dumbfounded. "Why do you exist then?"

"Ah, I should have given some credit to you. There is a place where I do not exist. In fact, nothing exists in it. It is tangent to, and sometimes penetrates, all points in space and time, in all universes, both material and immaterial. It is the state of nothingness."

"Why isn't everything just the state of nothingness then? Why does there have to be a state of existence?"

"Because existence has to exist to serve as a counterbalance to nothingness."

"Isn't that using logic? You said logic also came from you, right?"

"It is something higher than logic, which you will not understand, because I cannot explain it to you, because there is no mechanism in either your brain or language that is able to comprehend it. Perhaps, in the future of your kind's existence, you will be able to create an entity that is able to comprehend it."

I had to be humble and accept my imperfection. "Fine, but what does all of this have to do with the principle of chaos?"

“The principle of chaos is an extension of the state of nothingness that is projected into my emanations. Its only desire is to attack the state of existence at any point it can, in order to corrupt it and bring it closer to the state of nothingness.”

“Why does it desire so?”

“It does not “desire” in the sense you are thinking of. This is its nature, the same way as it is the nature of stars to shine or of fire to burn. Indeed, human desire is of the same essence; the human desires because of the movement of chemicals in their brain.”

“Are you saying there’s no freewill?”

“Yes, but I’ll get to that later. Now you can understand the nature of the principle of chaos.”

“What does chaos have to do with nothingness?”

“It is difficult to explain. Perhaps a firsthand experience will be easier for you.”

Before I react, he shoved me into the hole, and I was falling into the chamber. I tried to scream, but I could not because of my fear.

I landed on a stone surface. At first I did not feel anything, but after a second the sensation of agony flooded into me. Every limb of my body was broken.

Trying to ignore the pain, I tried to see in the darkness. Miraculously, the candle that fell alongside me was still burning, and I could see the monster slithering towards me. Even if I tried, I could not get an inch away, as my limbs were unable to move. It got closer and closer. Eventually, it came up to me, and I felt the mane of the lion’s head brush against my body.

What happened next was indescribable. Although having been clean all my life, I had heard stories about the effects of psychedelics online. This must be close to how it would have felt using them.

It was as if the matrix of reality had been corrupted. I saw and heard nothing, yet felt as if blinding lights and deafening noises were all around me. I could not think, yet my mind was filled with thoughts that seemingly came from nowhere. I did not know how long it lasted, as I had lost all track of time. Eventually, everything faded, and I lost consciousness.

I was lying on a soft surface, with another soft surface covering me. I recognized the sensation as being in a bed with a blanket covering me. I opened my eyes, expecting to be in a hospital, but instead I saw that I was lying on a mattress inside a tent. Monad was standing beside my mattress.

In a flash, what had happened came back to me. "Why did you push me?"

"It was necessary for you to understand the nature of the principle of chaos. Tell me, do you now understand how chaos and nothingness are linked?"

I tried to recall what I had experienced. "I do not know how to put it into words, but I believe I saw a representation of nothingness. I do not know why I feel so."

"That was the best I can do. Although you will be unable to explain it to others, you nevertheless can now understand it for yourself. True nothingness cannot be comprehended by the human brain, as it does not exist in nature."

He continued: "Whereas all of existence came from me, the state of nothingness, being opposed to the state of existence, inserted chaos as a principle into my creation to weaken the principles that emanated from me. Because chaos did not come from existence, it has the ability to corrupt whatever did come from existence."

"I thought you said chaos also came from you?"

"It did. Without me, there would be no order. Without order, nothingness could not have inserted chaos as a counterbalance to order. As I said, it is the shadow of me, the other side of the coin."

"Can't you just destroy it?"

"I cannot."

"Why? Couldn't you do anything you wanted to?"

"You have already forgotten that I do not "want" as you define it. I am not a being; I am the essence of a concept. The wind does not "want" to keep blowing; the movement of the air molecules that compose the wind determines when it stops. In the same manner, my actions are determined by the process of existence itself, and it does not allow for destroying the principle of chaos."

"Are you going to do anything about it then?"

"Of course. I have created you."

“Me? Am I a prophet?”

“No. No one is. I have never specifically picked out anyone at birth to discover the principles. Anyone who discovers them has done so as a result of their own will and intellect, including you. Besides, I do not mean “you” as in your personal self. I mean the consciousness that inhabits you.”

“Isn’t the consciousness just the core of the self?”

“It is not. In fact, your consciousness has taken on an uncountable number of selves before you.”

“Even if I was reincarnated many times before, why did you choose me now? And why not someone else? I am unfit for the duty of spreading this message. I am extremely uncharismatic, not good with speeches, and easily attract negative attention.”

“Why do you believe that I didn’t choose everyone else as well?”

“You specifically stated that you created me for this matter, and thus implied that everyone else, or at least most others, do not have the same mission.”

“Everyone has the same mission as yours, because they are you as well.”

“I’ve heard about the “all is one” stuff, and I’m tired of it.”

“You fail to understand its true meaning, making you no better than the hippies that parrot the phrase. Your consciousness, over an uncountable duration, will inhabit every brain, throughout all time, in every universe.”

“What about all the other consciousnesses then?”

“There are no other consciousnesses. The consciousness currently inhabiting you is the only one in all of existence.”

“So everyone around me has no consciousness?”

“No. Your consciousness has inhabited, or will inhabit them as well. Everyone around you is also you. Every being in this universe, and all the other universes also, your consciousness has either inhabited in the past, will inhabit in the future, or in the case of Arkhos, is inhabiting right now. Of course, the timeline of reincarnation I speak of is different from the timeline the universe progresses. Your consciousness only follows the timeline during each incarnation, and between incarnations, it ignores the time flow of the material universe.”

“So everyone I ever interacted with is me? Everyone I hate in my life is me?”

“That is correct. Also, you must not hate them, but rather hate the brains they have. The consciousness, of which there is only one across every being that will ever exist, is always pure. It is the processes of their material brains that is the cause of their constant antagonization of you. If you hate their consciousness, you are hating your own consciousness, since the two are the exact same thing.”

“If it is to inhabit everyone, it will have to travel back in time at some point, right?”

“Time is not as it seems. To me, it is merely another dimension, the same as those of space. It is only because of your consciousness’s imprisonment in your brain that you fail to see this. Every time the brain containing your consciousness ceases to function, it seeks out a newly formed brain, even if it is in the “past” of the time of death of the previous brain.”

“But that creates a paradox. Before I die in a certain incarnation, if I knew my consciousness was going to be sent into the past, I could store information in it, thus changing the timeline.”

“That is impossible for you. The consciousness does not store information, and cannot be altered in its pure form. In its pure form, the consciousness does not think, for it does not need to, as there is nothing that concerns it, since it is not within any universe. It is only the brain that determines how the information is stored and processed.”

“But if the brain already processes everything, what is the evolutionary need for consciousness?”

“Consciousness acts as a catalyst for the processing. Think of it this way: imagine someone laying an oil-soaked rope along a certain path, then lighting a fire at one end. The path the fire will follow is already set, but the fire itself is still required for the rope to burn.”

“So for every thought I have, my consciousness is only the catalyst, and it is merely chemicals in my brain at work? Since you implied that freewill does not exist, why did you create my consciousness? Why did you trap me in the creation of the principle of chaos? Is it just for me to suffer?”

“I have cast you into the chaos for you to defeat it. Your goal, in every universe, is to clear the universe of chaos, and nullify the cycle of chaos in the universe.”

“Cycle of chaos?”

“Every universe will continue to die and be reborn until the chaos is removed from it.”

“And what happens after?”

“When it is free from chaos, your consciousness will move on to the next universe to be purified.”

“I’m a janitor?”

“Essentially, yes.”

“And what is my reward for all of this?”

“Once every universe has been purified from chaos, you will return to your original state, in the highest world, and be freed from the material prison. That is the answer to your question on how to attain the highest state.”

“Why did you put me into the material prison in the first place?”

“Because it is of my nature to do so. Do not forget that I do not “think” or “desire” in the way you understand it. Think of it as my duty, as the principle of existence, to create you.”

“And what if I don’t want to do all of this?”

“Then you will still be trapped within this universe, whether you like it or not. You will still live through the immeasurable suffering of every being in this universe, and then when it is reborn, you will live through the suffering of every being in its next iteration, and the next, and so on, until one of your future incarnations decides to try to stop the cycle, finds the truth, and manages to stop the cycle of this universe, sending your consciousness to the next one.”

“Wait, this doesn’t make sense. You say that every thought, emotion, desire, and sense I have is the result of the material brain, and the consciousness only acts as a catalyst for them to manifest. If that were to hold true, why would the material brain attempt to destroy the material universe it is part of?”

“Now you are finally getting to the point I have been trying to explain to you. Normally, it would be the nature of a material universe to perpetuate its existence. However, when your consciousness is put inside one, it is able to work against chaos, since consciousness is created from order. Eventually, it will defeat the chaotic universe and render it pure.”

“How many universes do I have to do this to before I attain the highest state?”

“You will not comprehend the number. But, rest assured, it is not infinite.”

“So I will have to go through an uncountable number of lives in an uncountable number of universes, suffering all the way, just to achieve the state I was originally in and the state I would have been in had you not cast me into the material world?”

“That is correct. However, after you clear a universe, the next universes will progressively have less and less suffering.”

“But since there are uncountable universes, the difference in suffering between them will be all but infinitesimal. What is the point of having to redo the cycle over and over again each time I clear a universe, when I can just establish a civilization to provide me minimal suffering in every lifetime in this current universe?”

“You know the law of entropy. Universes cannot last forever. Inevitably, if you do not clear the current universe of chaos, it will destroy itself and be reborn, and you will have to start all over again in the next iteration of the same universe, which is even worse than starting all over again in the next.”

“And how long have I been doing this entire process for?”

“It’s better that I show you something first, and then I will answer your question. Get up.”

Awkwardly, I realized that I was still lying on the mattress in the tent. Groaning, I pushed myself up. Monad gave me his hand and helped me to my feet.

“Where’s the tent’s door-“

Without batting an eye, he went up to one of the tent’s walls and tore it open with his bare hands.

I could see that we were in a forest. He pointed to a pair of shoes beside my mattress. “Put them on and follow me.”

I threw on the shoes and stepped outside. There was a chill in the air, but not strong enough to make me feel discomfort, so I ignored it.

“Where are we?”

He gestured towards a certain direction with his hand. “Look.”

I saw something that I had only seen in documentaries and encyclopedias. There was what appeared to be an early hominid sitting against a tree. One of its arms had a huge injury on it, and it was bleeding rapidly.

“Can’t we help it?”

Calmly, with no agitation in his voice, he solemnly replied: “It is living the last of its life and will die in a few hours.”

“Can we help it though?”

“Why do you want to? This is just how nature works. Animals die of physical injuries every day in the wilderness.”

“But that is greater than an animal. Although it is not full human yet, it is very close. Perhaps its kind will evolve into humans in a few hundred thousand years.”

“You have insight. It is the first being in your universe to evolve the capability of containing the consciousness within its brain.”

“So animals with lower intelligence aren’t conscious?”

“Why do you need to know?”

“Because animals suffer a lot and I want to make sure I won’t be born into them?”

“Even if they were conscious, there is very little you can do. Most animal suffering occurs in the wild, and there is very little you can do to prevent that, and it is not worth your effort. Thus, it is unproductive to consider this. For all intents and purposes, right now, you are looking at your first incarnation in this universe.”

“First? There’s an order to my incarnations?”

“I am not saying “first” in the timeline of incarnations your consciousness experiences, but rather as in the chronological timeline of this universe. As for whether there is an order or not for the latter, I will not tell you, because that is irrelevant. You will live through every pain nevertheless; it is like the question of whether you will get an injection tomorrow in the morning or afternoon.”

“But I want to know which pains are already behind me.”

“You’ll forget it after this death regardless. Even if you had the knowledge, it’ll only comfort you for this life, and there exist far better coping mechanisms.

You should frankly not care whether your current life is your first or last in this universe. Next question."

"Why are you showing me the primate when it is so close to its death?"

"Because you must understand the true nature of this universe. Take a look around. How would you describe life in this predicament?"

I took a close look at the forest landscape. The early hominids, I thought, had to bear with the scorching heat and chilling cold without any clothes or shelter. They had to put their lives in danger just for the constant task of obtaining food, could die any day from injury or disease, and had none of the things even the poorest people in the world today have.

Born into the chaos of the forest, their entire lives had absolutely no happiness, except for the rare moments where there was enough food and no dangers to worry about. They had no way of enjoying themselves and were doomed to constantly forage and protect themselves until their lives finally gave out.

In a way, it is similar to life today. There is no choice but to suffer and toil just to survive, with the only escape, at least from the current life, being death. But the toil and suffering here, I thought, was much greater than even the poorest people living today, or even the early agriculturalists.

"This is the worst place to be alive."

"And what would you call that?"

"What do you mean?"

"Your language has a way to express what you just said in a single word, does it not?"

"The worst place to live?"

"Yes."

"Hell?"

"You are correct."

"What are you trying to say? Are you saying that this is hell?"

"Not in the Abrahamic sense, but the Dharmic sense. Do you know anything about Dharmic cosmology?"

"Kind of. There is a hierarchy of worlds. The material world is a neutral world, there are positive worlds above the world and negative worlds below it."

"Now imagine, they were right on the cosmology, but wrong on the statement that this world is neutral."

"You mean this world is a negative one?"

"Why wouldn't it be? Can you see any positive things in the first stage of humanity?"

"I don't think so."

"So there you have it. This world is meant to be hell; humanity has merely built civilizations in it to reduce their suffering and distract themselves from the fact."

"And why am I being born into this world? What have I done to deserve this punishment?"

"You have done nothing wrong. Remember that every world you have been born into was better than the last."

"What about the first world I was born into? What was that like? You still haven't told me how long I've been doing all of this for."

"Perhaps, to answer your question, you should ponder the opposite. What do you think the last world you will be born into, before ascending to the final state, will be like?"

"Judging by the nature of the final state, I'm guessing the world of my last birth will be very close to being completely immaterial, almost perfectly ordered in its structure, having almost no suffering, requiring almost no thought, and requiring very little effort to escape. The containment structure for the consciousness would also be much purer compared to the brains that exist in this universe."

"And what properties of such a world would create these conditions?"

"The world would probably not be based on particle physics. Space and time would not exist, or if they did, would be far less complex than this world's three spatial dimensions and one dimension of constant temporal progression. There would only be one physical force, or none at all. Since the world is not particle-based, the consciousness would be contained within something much gentler than a mass of biological tissue, meaning there would be far less restrictions on the consciousness, allowing for its power to be harnessed

much more efficiently. Because of this, thoughts and emotions would probably be obsolete, with a higher form of processing augmenting the consciousness. There would likely be no external sensory input, as the world would not have many things to perceive.”

“And what would the opposite of it be?”

“I don’t know. Infinite dimensions of space and time? A system of physics with infinite categories of particles and infinite kinds of forces? ”

“The most chaotic worlds which you have just described, and of which there are infinite in number, are too unstable to contain consciousness.”

“So they wouldn’t be able to be cleared of chaos?”

“They are so close to chaos that it does not matter. Trying to clear them of chaos is like trying to destroy chaos itself, which is impossible. Only in the universes where it is possible for your consciousness to be contained within, will there be the possibility of clearing them.”

“So the universes I have to clear are finite, yes?”

“That is correct.”

“Can you now answer my question about what the first-ever universe I was in was like?”

“I do not think I need to. The image in your head is now probably clear.”

I imagined a universe where time was much more complicated than linear, with tens or maybe even hundreds of spatial dimensions, with perhaps not just zero-dimensional particles, but also stringy one-dimensional particles, or even higher-dimension particles, which I can’t even imagine how they would look like, with all the particles being propelled around by uncountable kinds of forces.

It would be extremely close to total chaos, but with just barely the amount of order to support a brain-like structure that could contain consciousness.

And of course, the suffering would be immense.

“And I’m past all of that?”

“Yes. The suffering you have in this universe, even in your first few incarnations as a hunter-gatherer, is still immensely less than the chaos you had to endure in these worlds. Now you have your answer for how long you’ve

been doing all of this for; it is finite, but longer than you can count, and started from the universe you mentioned, which was the first one that you incarnated into.”

“And as I clear worlds, the next worlds will become better and better, until I finally reach the most optimal state?”

“That is correct.”

“There is one more thing you have not explained to me. How do I “clear” a universe?”

I was in the middle of what looked like a control room. It looked like what I had seen in science fiction movies or tech documentaries. The room was dark, with only a dim neon light on the ceiling. Each side of the room was covered in a screen. There was no exit in sight, but since I knew this wasn’t real, the room’s structure needn’t make sense.

There were many seats facing each of the screens. Monad gestured to me to sit on one of them. I walked there and sat, and he sat next to me.

“It was good for you to ask that question.”

“How about a warning next time you transport me to one of these scenes?”

“You do not need a warning. It doesn’t do anything to you. Also, that’s besides the point. You wanted me to explain to you how to clear the universe.”

“How then?”

“Are you expecting me to answer you straight-up?”

“Why not? You’ve done that for every question I asked you before.”

“That is because you already had a basic understanding of the topics. For this, you have very little, and thus I am only able to offer very little information, which you have to piece together yourself.”

“What do you mean? Why is my knowledge and yours linked? Aren’t you supposed to know everything?”

“You have forgotten that this is all taking place inside your mind. I am not an actual entity, but a concept. Your mind is utilizing my principle to process the information you already know. For this topic, you know very little to begin with,

and thus even with your ability to access my principle to process the information you have, it is very difficult for you to do so."

"Okay then. Can you help me process the information I have then?"

"Very well, I will. Let's start with the very basic stuff. What is the goal of life in all religions?"

"It is for the consciousness to obtain a more desirable state after death, right?"

"And what are the common practices that are supposed to lead to a more desirable state?"

"Recognition of the divine. Resisting material impulses. Helping those in need."

"These are all good things, but doing them by oneself is not enough. The human brain is a very crude mechanism; doing good things alone, while trapped within it, cannot lead to ascension from this world."

"What am I supposed to do then?"

"What, in your universe, is greater than a human?"

"Maybe extraterrestrials?"

"Assume they do not exist in your universe. Whether they do or not, it does not matter to your kind, as even if they do exist, they have no interest in interacting with you, as the Fermi paradox has proven."

"What then? As far as my species knows, we are the most prominent entities in our current material reality. Our civilization is unparalleled by anything we know of in our universe."

"You just said it yourself."

"What?"

"Think back to what you said."

"Our civilization?"

"That is correct. A civilization, an amalgamate of humans, is greater than any individual human."

"So what you're saying is that instead of improving myself, I should improve civilization if I want to ascend past this world?"

“Have you already forgotten what I told you? You will not ascend past this world until it is cleared of chaos completely, and to do that, you have to build a civilization that will eventually be capable of doing so.”

“Instead of giving me the instructions on building an entire civilization that might be able to accomplish the magnum opus in perhaps a few billion years, why don't you just give me the instructions yourself?”

“This is where the limitations I have told you about come in. The instructions for building such a civilization are the best your brain can process, as the instructions for clearing the universe of chaos outright would be trillions of times your brain's capacity.”

“Fine. Can you tell me the civilization-building instructions then?”

“Let's start slowly. Why do you think all the religions of the past agree on the three points you mentioned?”

“The first point, recognition of the divine, even when there is no objective proof, is meant to be a way to unify every member of the faith under one belief. The second point, the rejection of materialism to at least some degree, is because of the universally recognized struggle between the material brain and the consciousness, and the wish for the consciousness to triumph over the impulsive, primitive, and decadent brain. The third point, altruism without expecting anything in return, is intended to establish a moral standard that will eventually improve society.”

“You are correct on all three counts. But do you know what the problem is with these religions? Do you know why, even after they have gained political, economic, and civil influence, not a single one of them have established the state of virtue and justice they all promised? Do you know why they have all, to some extent, been incorporated into the old regimes they vowed to replace?”

“That question has always puzzled me. Why is that?”

“The answer is very simple. Their mistake was focusing the application of the values on individual people instead of on a civilization as a whole.”

“Didn't they also apply the values to the countries they managed to take hold of?”

“Only in words. The truth is that, in practice, only monks, clerics, and religious scholars take the creed to heart. The rest only follow the faith to give

themselves a sense of moral goodness. This is why even the most religious countries face the same issues as atheistic ones.”

“So what you’re trying to say is that I need to apply them to an entire civilization? How do I do that? Are you getting me to start a new religion?”

“If by “religion” you mean a system of metaphysics combined with a way of life, then yes. But what I am about to tell you would not be thought of as a religion in the traditional sense.”

“Why is that?”

“Because this doctrine is not based on superstition, but a logical calculation of the best course of action given the circumstances.”

“How is this message supposed to not be superstition? It all sounds pretty irrational to me.”

“You will gradually see how, as I explain it to you. Let’s begin with the first point, the recognition of the divine.”

“This is something that I’ve meant to ask you. How do I prove to would-be readers of the doctrine all of these metaphysical things you’ve shown me? Aren’t the people going to question everything?”

“You do not need to prove them for them to be valid. You only need to prove one thing.”

“And what is the thing I need to prove?”

“It is the only thing that, conveniently, does not need to be proven.”

“What?”

“It is the thing that cannot be proven any way scientifically, but does not need to be proven, as everyone knows for certain it exists.”

“The consciousness?”

“You’ve got it.”

“So the consciousness is definitely real. What then?”

“You can also prove that there is only one consciousness in all of existence.”

“How do I do that? Almost everyone believes that each person has a separate consciousness.”

“You just have to ask them to meditate upon their own consciousness when you are explaining this. The nature of consciousness, which everyone can detect, means that there cannot be other consciousnesses.”

“What?”

“This cannot be explained precisely in human words, but I am confident that most of the people who are able to contemplate their consciousness effectively will get it. In fact, most people have already pondered the question themselves. However, most of the ones who ponder it choose to believe there are other consciousnesses, simply because it is more convenient and socially acceptable to do so.”

“Really? I’ve never seen anyone talk about there only existing a single consciousness that is incarnated as every human being that will ever exist.”

“No, but they have pondered something very similar. You’ve definitely heard of people questioning whether everyone else is a consciousness-less husk, and they are the only person with a consciousness.”

“This seems to be the logical conclusion in the face of the proposal that there is only one consciousness.”

“Not so. You’ve heard of the argument against solipsism, right?”

“Yes, I think it goes like this: even if an external reality might not exist, it is still better to presume that it does, because acting like it does not exist will result in very irrational decisions, while acting like it does exist will allow one to rationally process the situation even if external reality actually does not exist.

“Now think of the path of logic one should take if it was held that there was only one consciousness.”

“You’re saying that it’s best to assume that the single consciousness inhabits everyone in the world, since if one assumes that the consciousness inhabits them alone, they will begin to make selfish decisions that do not benefit society as a whole. Even worse, if everyone does this and becomes selfish for this reason, society will be ruined. On the contrary, if it were to be assumed that one’s consciousness has inhabited or will inhabit everyone else, it will foster cooperation between people, with the shared common goal of liberating the consciousness from the cycle.”

“That is correct.”

“Why haven’t any previous religions taught this then?”

“They have. Just look at the concept of karma. When you do something good or bad to anyone, you will have the same thing done to you in a future lifetime. This all makes sense if you accept the theory that your consciousness will be reincarnated as everyone.”

“Why didn’t they explicitly preach this message clearly then, and instead only wrapped it in layers of metaphors?”

“Because at that time, the rate of technological advance was so small that it was unnoticeable by the masses. Therefore, people thought that future society, even uncountable years into the future, would be identical to their society. If the message I told you was preached at that time, there would be no way of convincing people that there could be any way out of the cycle. Thus, only individual salvation or liberation was able to be preached.”

“So Buddha was lying when he said that the individual could be liberated within only a few lifetimes, instead of having to go through the lives of every being in all of time and existence?”

“Not so. Instead, he gave an encoded message containing the instructions for liberation, in the hope that there will come a time when it can be deciphered. Of course, the people of his time had various interpretations of his message that came to other conclusions.”

“And you’re giving me this one? How do I prove that it is correct? I have zero connections to or initiation in Buddhism, I have never read any canon, and I am not even of age. Who will believe that my interpretation is right and that theirs are all wrong?”

“Relax. I’m not asking you to challenge any tradition. I’m just pointing out that there are ancient philosophers who realized that there is only one consciousness in all of existence. Besides, what I gave you will not be fully correct either. As I mentioned, all of this conversation is the result of your own neural processes, so there will naturally be errors.”

“So part of what you are showing me will be proven incorrect in the future?”

“Of course. You are just a small part of the process of getting closer to the truth, which will still take hundreds, if not thousands, of years at the least.”

“Even after I explain to them my view of consciousness, how will I be able to prove the existence of the principles? And what about the theory that there are infinite worlds of existence?”

"You can't prove them, but they are not fringe. Both have already been stated before in metaphysics and philosophy. The principles are the embodiments of concepts, and nearly all religions have gods or angels that are tied to concepts. In fact, it is even easier to prove the principles than it is to prove gods or angels, as you do not need to claim that we have powers beyond what is given to us through the laws of existence, or that we are sentient."

"You're not sentient?"

"I have already told you. I am aware of everything, and thus have no need for senses. I already know everything, and therefore I do not need to think. I operate through the laws of existence alone, and thus do not need to make decisions. Thus, sentience is useless to me."

"So I just go to them and explain there's a bunch of concepts that can be thought of as entities?"

"Yes. You do not even need to prove it, as it is already definitely known that concepts exist. As for the depiction as entities, these are only metaphors."

"Even so, how do I justify my cosmology? How do I prove that the universe is the result of chaos meddling with the emanation of the principle of existence? How do I prove that there are infinitely many universes? How do I prove consciousness was made to clear the universe of chaos? How do I prove that, by accomplishing the task of clearing all universes, the consciousness will be liberated?"

"I shall address this one point at a time. Firstly, are you familiar with quantum physics?"

"I do not know much, but I have a basic knowledge of it."

"Are you aware of the randomness of quantum processes? Ever heard of quantum tunneling, quantum spin and entanglement, and virtual particles?"

"Yes, but what about them?"

"All this time, has your mind been too naive to realize that these are all the work of a chaotic principle? All these years, did you really think that a universe completely made from an ordered principle would have these components within it?"

"So I just explain the universe to be an emanation of order, corrupted by chaos?"

“Essentially. Although there is no way to prove it objectively, this is as good as you can get with this theory.”

“What about the infinite universes then?”

“Ever heard of the many-worlds interpretation? This is essentially what has been revealed to you.”

“I can see why, but the many-worlds interpretation would imply perfect order, and that would contradict the statement that the universe is infested with chaos.”

“Not so. What chaos does is that it splits a perfect emanation of the ordered model of a world into infinite, irregular instances. With this explanation, you can adapt your theory to the many-worlds interpretation.”

“What about the interaction of consciousness with the universe?”

“The struggle between the conscious spark and the material brain is already evident, and that is just the logical extrapolation of it. As for the statement that the universe is meant to be cleared for the consciousness to ascend, think of it this way: if there was no reason to clear a universe, the most logical thing to do next would be to create as many incarnations for the consciousness to be in as possible that have the least amount of suffering possible. Since you, and the people you will be teaching this theory to, are clearly not these beings, it is more statistically likely that there is a motive to clear the universe instead of creating more beings within it.”

“That is it? All I have to do is just say these things? I don’t need a more complex explanation?”

“The simplest explanation is often the best. Go with what you have.”

“And that’s all I have to do?”

“That is the first step. Now let us move onto the second of the three practices that will be used in the rallying of people to your theory with the goal of establishing a civilization, the notion of rejecting materialism.”

“Wouldn’t that repel people though? Most people are attached to materialism to such an extent that it is the only purpose of their lives. It is simply impossible to convince them to assist me in the task of finding out how to ascend our consciousness.”

“Do not worry about these kinds of people. Just let them go on with their lives.”

“But are they not incarnations of me also? Why should I abandon iterations of myself?”

“Because there is no point trying to enlighten these iterations of yourself, and even if you could, they would not be productive. Rather, focus on those who have the patience to listen to you and the intellect to understand you.”

“Wouldn’t very few people get my theory then?”

“You are neither an Evangelical preacher nor a New Age mystic. Do not pursue quantity, but rather quality in those who listen to you. In fact, I encourage you to ignore those who are not willing to understand your theory completely. Those who are able to understand you fully will be those most capable of building your envisioned civilization. Your lack of charisma is not a weakness but a strength in this regard, because it will repel the shallow and turn back the impatient.”

“Okay, back to what you were saying, how is the rejection of materialism to be implemented in practice?”

“I’ll let you take a look at materialism, then you can say for yourself.”

The screens on all four walls lit up. There were a few dozen panels on each screen, each displaying the daily life of a different person. I noticed that they all appeared to live comfortably within an economically developed city.

Despite this, all of them continued to act as if they were still desperate for survival in a pre-industrial society.

I saw them desperately trying to increase their social standing by saying and doing meaningless things, forming and breaking all forms of relationships over the most insignificant things, and seeking wealth, power, and prestige even though their current situation was already enough to satisfy one who is not filled with greed.

The worst thing I saw was people reverting back to their most primitive instincts. They eat themselves beyond full without noticing; they waste their hard-earned money on buying things only for the sake of appeal to their eyes; they constantly try to satisfy their carnal desire of lust.

There were also people who were trying to escape materialistic life. Some of them were trying to move back to a less technological life by moving to a rural area; some of them turned to online influencers and lifestyle gurus who promised them a way out; some of them took solace in religion and superstition.

“Well, what do you think?”

“I have always wondered why people living in the most advanced societies in the world act the most primitively. It's a paradox I could never get my head around.”

“The answer is that the brain is not designed for and cannot handle a situation where all the basic needs are fulfilled. Although a small minority take it as an opportunity to pursue things of an intellectual nature, the majority of people get stuck on the primal levels of desire and artificially create problems to manifest the feeling of false accomplishment in order to satisfy their desires.”

“And if materialism is rejected fully, will this stop?”

“It is impossible for materialism to be fully rejected by a human in their current condition. Since, at present, you still have to use the brain as a mechanism for your consciousness to interact with the world, the brain will always project some of its instincts.”

“They can't all be removed?”

“Certainly not, unless you want to kill the person. For example, without the subconscious instinct of breathing, one would suffocate in a matter of minutes.”

“What then? Why are you telling me to remove instincts when they can't be removed?”

“Firstly, it is not removal, but deactivation, as instincts are ultimately genetic in cause. Secondly, there are some instincts that can be safely deactivated.”

“Which ones?”

“Think of it like this: there is no instinct without a cause, as all of them have their bases in the harsh and unforgiving environment humans lived in when they first came into existence. As humanity advanced, it no longer relied on a certain fraction of these instincts. As it advances even more, more of the instincts will become obsolete. At one point, even breathing will no longer be necessary. But for now, the instincts that can be rid of are very few.”

“Why doesn't civilization get rid of them then?”

“They try it all the time. Both religious and secular philosophical systems have emphasized that there is nothing to gain and much to lose from holding onto obsolete instincts.”

“Why didn’t they succeed in turning the people to their philosophy?”

“Because none of these philosophical systems, religious or secular, even if they took control of a society, were able to change the fundamentals of the society because they have already been engrained deep into the foundations of the civilization. Constantine still kept the structure of the Roman Empire with the institutional religion being the only difference. Muhammad, while eliminating idol worship, did not change the core of Arabian society. Robespierre and Lenin did not eliminate the elite class, but merely changed the people composing it.”

“And how is it possible that I can do any different?”

“My command to you is not to try to change society, for you cannot; it is to establish a new society, composed entirely of those who follow the values of this message.”

“Where? All the land on this planet is already claimed. Until technology is developed for my kind to inhabit places beyond this planet, it is impossible for me to establish a new civilization anywhere.”

“Not so. There are places which, although suitable for habitation, have almost no human settlement. Although there are locals and authorities there, they can be safely ignored. Buy some land, make peace with the locals, and pay a yearly tribute to the authorities if necessary. But this is beside my point. I’m telling you to gather people and start a civilization; you can work out the specifics later. The important question is not where, when, or how the civilization is established, but rather who are to be the pioneers to establish it. I am now going to explain to you how to prepare the pioneers. Let me ask you, why do you find your peers in school annoying?”

“How is that relevant?”

“Just answer the question.”

“It is because I find it foolish to try to gain popularity and develop shallow and false connections in high school. When they graduate and go to university or start a career, most, if not all, of these connections are going to be broken. The popularity would completely fade within a matter of weeks of graduating. Some of them are even doing it to the expense of their future. They are getting into physical fights, using substances, being promiscuous, and even breaking the law in plain sight without any attempt of hiding it, knowing fully well they are going to be seen, arrested, and prosecuted. I just do not understand why they are doing all of this.”

“Let me tell you why. Recall Maslow’s hierarchy.”

“Uh-huh.”

“Maslow, a genius for his time, was able to accurately pinpoint the pattern of human desires. Unknowingly, he also pinpointed the stages of human civilization, where the higher levels are unlocked when a civilization is able to steadily provide for the desires of the previous level in its inhabitants. What he did not know, or if he did, forgot to add, was that for some humans, even if a certain level of needs is completely satisfied, they will stagnate on that level, trying to increase what they have on that level instead of moving on to the next. Take these teenagers you mentioned. They, despite already having sufficient respect from everyone around them, still seek to expand their spheres of influence for no reason except for the sake of itself, hooked on the feelings of power and validation.”

“Why do people stagnate?”

“It is because they cannot imagine a life more sophisticated than the one they are living, or if they could imagine it, they choose to ignore their imagination. Thus, they continue to seek more of whatever fulfills their needs at that level, despite the fulfillment already complete.”

“And that is the entire reason for materialism?”

“What else would it be? Think about it. You already know that the reason for all desire is biological instinct. Before there was any civilization, humans were lucky if they could fulfill the first stage for a few days in a row. In that condition, it was nearly impossible for higher needs to even be acknowledged, let alone be fulfilled. This condition is natural for the human mind, and even if all the needs of a certain level are fulfilled, most minds are still unable to progress past their natural condition.”

“So you’re telling me that I need to assemble a pioneer force made entirely of people who are able to progress beyond the natural stage?”

“Yes, but also no. No one is born capable of mentally progressing like that. Although there is a genetic factor, there must be strict guidance for advancement into the final stage of the pyramid. This applies for everyone, including you.”

“Me? What am I doing wrong?”

“Do not forget that although the level of self-actualization is traditionally placed at the top, it is still an obstacle in the way of the logical conclusion of the

journey towards the final desire, that being to seek for transcendence. I can see that you are still quite stuck on that level. Do I have to remind you of the vision of the city you saw earlier?"

"But that was because I did not really care about what would happen to my consciousness after my death at that time. How was I supposed to know, before I stumbled upon you by accident, that any of the things you showed me existed?"

"And how do the classmates you hate know that there exists a life beyond friendship drama and clique infighting?"

"It's pretty obvious to them, isn't it? There's an entire society outside of their little bubble. They are told by adults all the time to quit their shenanigans and prepare for what happens after graduation, but only a small minority realize the gravity of the situation."

"And it wasn't obvious to you that your consciousness existed outside of the standard model of physics? How ignorant do you have to be to realize that none of the eighteen elementary particles and four forces could account for your consciousness?"

"I just treated it like an unsolved anomaly. There are plenty of them in physics, such as dark matter and dark energy. I found no need to be concerned over it."

"You are using the exact same excuse as the people who bullied you in school. To them, there is no need to be concerned about what happens to them after high school, as they see it as irrelevant to their current life. You, at least before this encounter, had no concern about what happens to your consciousness after death, as you saw it as irrelevant to your current life."

"But how was I supposed to find out more about my consciousness? The scientific method has no relevance in this matter, and all religions I have ever studied turned out to be flawed. What was I supposed to do, try to find out on my own?"

"Exactly. You need to find out on your own. In fact, your subconscious effort to find out more about your consciousness is what led you here. And since you have already made this step, although you still have a long way to go, I will not criticize you further; you can do that yourself, as you have ample time. Rather, I am going to tell you the way to bring others to the point you have been brought to."

“How am I supposed to do that? There is no way for me to trigger an encounter with God in their mind, is there?”

“Not directly, but you can help. Once you have guided someone past all five layers of possible stagnation, they will instinctively seek out transcendence.”

“But isn’t transcendence a desire also? What makes it any different from the traditional five layers?”

“Because while the traditional five layers are the desires of the material brain, caused by evolutionary instinct, transcendence is the desire of the consciousness itself, separate from material reality, as it is the nature of the consciousness to rebel against the material universe and seek ascension back to where it originated from. Once the brain has rid itself of the five levels of desires, the consciousness is able to take over and guide the brain it possesses towards the natural direction of the consciousness, just as a wind catches birds in it and guides them towards the destination of the wind, even if it is against the natural will of the birds.”

“So the consciousness is a parasite?”

“It is, not only of the brain, but of the entire universe. Remember, I sent consciousness into the universe to purge it.”

“So what you’re saying is that the material brain and the consciousness have different desires, and the consciousness must take control and suppress the desires of the brain.”

“This is what countless systems of philosophy have all taught. Stop focusing on trying to figure out how the consciousness and material brain interact, but rather how you can optimize the interaction in a way that the consciousness’s wishes are always put first. Now, let’s start with the easiest part: containing the first level of desires.”

“Isn’t that the hardest part to contain? The most primitive and basic instincts, the ones that were intended for purely physical, practical applications, the ones that have been ingrained into the psyche for hundreds of millions of years. Why do you call them the easiest?”

“You have forgotten that the practical applications have already been tamed. They have been tamed long ago when civilization was founded, and you only need to wrap up the remaining bit. Of course, as society has become more hedonistic recently, you may need to do a bit of extra work.”

“How do I eliminate hedonism then?”

“The people who will gravitate to you will mostly already have their first level of desires in control. For those who don’t, simply refer them to self-help programs. There already exists an institutional mechanism to combat the first level of desires.”

“But didn’t you say that the current civilization is controlled by material instinct?”

“Yes, but at the very least it has recognized the dangers of keeping to the first level. There are not many ways to stagnate in this layer anyways; there are some people who impulsively consume food and some people who impulsively sleep and laze in excess. You can recognize most of them by their physique. For people like this, no one can help them but themselves, as they have dug deep pits in their mind that only they can climb out of. As they probably already know that it is bad for them, there is no need to tell them that. The best thing you can do is to give them words to increase their willpower, so they might eventually climb out.”

“I can’t do anything to help them?”

“Unfortunately, you cannot. The basest instincts, the ones hundreds of millions of years old, the ones used for primitive survival, are the ones most imperceptible to logic. For those who stagnate at that level, help can only come from within. However, there will be one day where these needs will no longer be relevant. Already today, assisted reproduction techniques are making traditional sexual reproduction obsolete, and soon there may be a complete substitute for food in the form of an intravenous liquid. A drug may be developed soon that eliminates the need for sleep with little to no negative side effects. With future enhancements, even air and water may no longer be necessary for human survival. When that time comes, it will be easier to rescue them from the cycle, as it will no longer be necessary to sustain human life.”

“But even if it is no longer necessary, some people are still going to be stuck to them.”

“Do not worry. For those who are seeking to get out, there will be a way for them in the future. Even now, since reproduction does not need to be done with sexual lust, those with attachment to lust can seek chemical or surgical procedures. Imagine this, but applied to food, sleep, and every other instinct.”

“You’re telling me to get everyone in the movement castrated? And you’re saying we should switch to an intravenous diet as soon as the technology is developed?”

“Calm down. It is not as bad as you frame it. Buddhism and most denominations of Christianity have requirements of celibacy for their monks or clergy. Implementing it will not be hard, and those who are attached to lust are unfit for membership in the cause. Castration is only a last resort for those who cannot eliminate their lust.”

“But celibacy only applied to monks and clergy, not all believers.”

At this point, Monad chuckled. “That is because at the time, artificial reproduction was impossible, and so sexuality, albeit only in marriage, was permitted, or otherwise the religion would have died out. But now, there is no need to do that, so now, there is no longer any excuse to have lust. In the future, the same can be said for food and sleep.”

“Even if I just say this, the magnitude of the envisioned lifestyle’s unattractiveness is multiplied manyfold. Even when I merely tell others that I wish to remain celibate for my entire life, they shoot looks of disgust at me. How can I tell them to follow me as well? Even worse is if I tell them that they must eventually stop eating and sleeping. Which reasonable person would want to give them up?”

“To answer your first question: those who consciously and willingly cling onto sexual desires are already lost to your cause. There is no need to recruit them. To answer your second question: it is nearly impossible for the need for food and sleep to be abolished in your lifetime. When the time comes, the attitudes toward food and sleep will almost certainly have changed. Even now, there are rapidly growing movements that are against eating and sleeping for the sake of pleasure. Soon, they will be seen as akin to the celibacy movement. When that time comes, you will likely not be alive anymore, but the ones you appoint to succeed you will be able to recruit them. However, for now, the best you can do is to discourage eating and sleeping for pleasure among your movement’s members.”

“How do I know if they are doing it for pleasure?”

“It doesn’t matter. Only be concerned if they are doing it in excess. If they are not, it is beyond your capability to discern. Shall we talk about the second stage now?”

“Sure.”

“Tell me what you know about it.”

“There is an innate desire for stability in one’s life. People, by instinct, do not want unexpected change or disruption of a negative or even neutral nature to their life. In the state of nature, this meant protecting their dwelling, securing resources, and avoiding predators. However, as the world progressed, it gradually began to mean the securing of one’s position in life and the acquisition and possession of property.”

“Do you see how it hinders the consciousness and prevents it from breaking free?”

“Of course. It is what comes to the mind of most people when you speak to them the word “materialism”. They are strung up in their property, wealth, and status so much that they have been blinded to the possibility of a life outside of extravagance.”

“Indeed. This is why Jesus warned against becoming rich. Wealth is a blessing at the surface, but a burden and curse when its mask is lifted. All think wealth alleviates suffering, but it merely transmutes it into a different form. It is a surprise for this to happen. The richest people are usually the most well-educated and informed, and yet they still fall into the trap. Do you know why this is?”

“I’ve wondered that too. I don’t know why.”

“It is because when luxury is so prevalent in one’s life, the two become synonymous, and the only purpose of life for them becomes the need to live in luxury. This is not exclusive to the rich. More and more today, you can see those who are desperate to gain wealth for the sake of luxury, which they see as the sole purpose of their life. Have you ever met any followers of hustle culture at your school?”

“There are quite a few in my school. They keep preaching their vision of an extravagant life, and obsess over work, even though they are still in school. Even though none of them have the income they strive for yet, they do not save any of the money they make, but spend it on digital subscription plans and items, vanity collections, and showcasing at parties. If they make a thousand dollars a month, they will spend a thousand dollars a month. If they make ten thousand dollars a month, they will spend ten thousand dollars a month.”

“How do I get such people out of their predicament?”

“As I have said before, your primary focus is not to persuade people to turn away, but to help those who have already decided to turn away but are unable to do so because of their attachment.”

“And how do I do that?”

“Look to the ways of the early Christians, the Hindu ascetics, the Cathars, the Sufis, and the Amish. Look into the components of their life, and take the aspects that will be the most beneficial.”

“You’re telling me to encourage superstition and ban the use of technology?”

“Did you hear the last part of what I said? Only take the beneficial aspects. By all means, technology and advancement are to be revered, not feared, as they will be the only way to escape from the universe. Only take the parts about removing oneself from materialist life.”

“But it is impractical and useless to live the life of an ascetic. Nothing will ever get done if I, or anyone who is with me, lives like that.”

“I did not say that you or those you recruit must live without possessions. By all means, have a house, a car, and modern technology. In fact, it is okay for them to own a mansion and multiple cars, so long as they do not have possessions for the sake of itself. Do not exclude the rich from following you; warn them against material attachment more than you warn everyone else, as they are the most susceptible, but do not bar them from entering your movement or force them to give up their property.”

“What about everyone else?”

“There is no need to radically alter the financial life of anyone within the movement. The only sign that there is a problem you will have to address is if they start buying things with no practical value, such as designer clothing or collectibles, or frequently spending money on things like takeout food and subscriptions. When you establish your own civilization, this will be different, but for now, the best thing to do is to accept the economic situation and make the most you can out of it.”

“And what will happen when I start my civilization?”

“Be patient. You do not have a full understanding of the elimination of desires yet. If you rush right now, your civilization will be just as much a failure as Revolutionary America, Revolutionary France, or the Soviet Union. If you cannot get your people into good conduct and behavior, you are little better than commanding a band of apes. I hope I don’t have to tell you to be patient

again. Now let's move on and talk about the third level, which is the most relevant in the society you will be recruiting from, assuming it is done in the First World. Explain it to the best of your knowledge."

"People instinctively wish to form connections and interact with others, even if it brings no material benefit to them, and sometimes even if it causes material losses. This evolved out of the necessity to collaborate to altruistically provide, and was originally confined within one's family and clan, but eventually grew into interactions with those outside the family. Now, people will interact with and talk to each other, even if it brings them no material benefits, for the sake of itself."

"But you have not engaged in any of this, have you?"

"Only the interaction and communication needed for essential reasons. Other than that, I see no reason to talk to anyone."

"Very good. You are interacting with others only for practical purposes: to cooperate, mutually assist, and exchange information. Just as the sole practical purpose of food is nourishment, the sole practical purpose of interaction is mutual exchange. Anything other than that is a vanity. However, vanity is what most people ultimately pursue."

"You're getting me to tell people to cut off connections to all their non-essential friends?"

"You have framed it in a negative manner. They do not have to cut connections with those around them. In fact, you must forbid any members from cutting ties with anyone for the sake of joining the movement. Do not have them forsake their family, friends, coworkers, or any other people in their circle."

"Why not?"

"Firstly, if you encourage your followers to cut ties with everyone they know, they will be alienated from society and unable to help establish the new civilization. When it is established, it will be a different matter, but for now, have everyone continue on in their daily lives as usual."

"But how then will the desires of the third level be eliminated, if everyone is just going on with their usual lives?"

"The key is not to cut ties, but to carefully plan the interactions one has with those they have ties to. Tell them to not get caught up in affairs with their family and friends. If someone in their circle is negatively affecting them, then

they can cut them off. For everyone else in their circle, interact with them normally. If one of them invites them to an interaction, as long as it is not harmful, they are to accept. However, they are not to seek out any meaningless and purposeless interaction on their own. They are also not to be caught up within interaction for the sake of itself."

"What about forming connections in the first place?"

"You are to tell them this: when they look for friends or associates, they are to only choose those who are disciplined and capable of engaging in mutual assistance, and not make friends for the sake of itself. This is a message that is repeated: it is okay to do anything, as long as you are doing it for a practical purpose and not for the sake of itself."

"Anything?"

"Yes, anything. Have you ever heard of realpolitik?"

"Otto von Bismarck's strategy to unify Germany?"

"Do you know what he did?"

"He put aside all moral and ideological standards, and did whatever was necessary, as long as it was good for his nation."

"And through this, he was able to defeat all of his opponents, who bounded themselves with ideological and moral considerations. Even though it is the often the most hated approach, cold, uncaring logic always trumps everything else."

"And what about it?"

"You realize every nation, corporation, organization, and even person uses realpolitik? Everyone likes to pretend it is all sunshine and rainbows, but below the surface, everyone resorts to the same tactics: manipulation, betrayal, pacts, compromises, and playing dirty. This is simply a fact of life, and you shall be no exception."

"What do you mean? What am I supposed to do?"

"Do you remember the goal I set out for you?"

"Establish a civilization that will eventually be capable of escaping this reality."

"Correct. This is where realpolitik comes in. If you stay pure to everything and order those who follow you to seek abandonment of material instinct at any

and all cost, you will have a bunch of useless ascetics who cannot contribute anything to civilization-building. Therefore, the members of the movement must be actively using their positions in society to the fullest extent possible.”

“So I’m going to be encouraging people to only make and break friendships on a practical basis?”

“Of course. It’s what everyone does anyways; they just never realize it consciously, or if they did, they don’t admit it. The difference is that your people will be fully acknowledging it.”

“Doesn’t this go against realpolitik though? Aren’t you supposed to not admit it?”

“I mean acknowledging it to themselves. Of course they’re not going to say it to their friends. That is unless, of course, their friends take the time to read your book, in which case they are going to understand.”

“Understand what?”

“The reasoning that members of the movement follow, that morality is merely a collective delusion, a fact that everyone knows but few are brave enough to admit.”

“Won’t their friends lose trust in them then?”

“They already know it innately, and will not care. Some of the sensitive types will, but these people are not desirable to make friends with anyway.”

“Fair enough. But why is it so important for you to emphasize this? I think it’s already fairly obvious that realpolitik would be used to achieve the objectives you gave me.”

“I needed to make sure you had the knowledge in your head, as we are now going to talk about eliminating the desires of the fourth level.”

“Isn’t the fourth level just respect from one’s circle? That’s pretty similar to the third level if we want to eliminate excess desires.”

“It’s much more complicated than that. Do you know of the history of hierarchy?”

“Kind of. Before the invention of agriculture, the only leadership was in those who were the head of a family or clan. Following the agricultural revolution, different families and clans coalesced together, and prestige began to take form. In the millennia that followed, prestige would open the door to the

additional factors of wealth and power. But why do you ask me this? Hierarchy cannot be abolished in its entirety, and any revolution that has tried to do so has merely replaced it with a different hierarchy and ruling elite.”

“And this is what I wish you to do also.”

“Replace the elite with a different one? What’s that going to do? What kind of a difference will it make?”

“What difference did the American, French, and Russian Revolutions make?”

“Didn’t you say that they made absolutely no difference?”

“I meant that they made no difference at the base level. Your revolution, if it comes to fruition, will not either, by the way. But each managed to remove a primitive structure and replace it with a more modern one. Colonial rule with democracy, monarchism with republicanism, and feudalism with communism. Although the latter two collapsed, they made it impossible for the old system to be restored. Although monarchy was restored in France a few times, and Russia’s political landscape today is more or less oligarchic, full return to the previous political system was made impossible by the revolutions, and they set the course of political progress away from the old system.”

“Progress? Progress towards what?”

“Towards the less primitive political model.”

“How is it less primitive? You said minutes ago that there were no fundamental differences between the old system and the revolutionary system.”

“There is not a complete change, but at least a few aspects of the primitive way of life were abolished. For example, because of the American Revolution, the primitive system of deciding leadership based on militaristic conquest was no more, replaced by a system of deciding leadership based on whoever could become the most popular in the political field.”

“But it’s still the same in essence. The conquest of the body, replaced with the conquest of the mind.”

“Yes, but as the mind is superior to the body, it is one step up. What I want you to do is to go the next step up, the conquest of the spirit.”

“What do you mean? How is it possible to subjugate the spirit?”

“The same way the mind is subjugated. Just as the mind is subjugated by the promise of fulfillment of material desires, the spirit is subjugated by the

promise of fulfillment of the desire of the consciousness, which is the cessation of suffering. All you have to do is lay out the plan of action I have told you about. Now, this is where realpolitik comes in. To establish the civilization I laid out for you, you must be willing to do anything necessary, understood?"

"Anything? What about—"

"If it is necessary, then yes. Are you ready to face the hard truth now?"

"Yes, I am."

"As you know, power and hierarchy are inherent. As long as a civilization exists, there will be people who rule over it. Although your job is to establish a new hierarchy, before that, you, as well as anyone who follows you, must contend with the authorities of the society you live in, and any rules they may set."

"That's pretty obvious. What use is there in blatantly breaking the law?"

"Not only the law."

"You mean the non-binding guidelines that institutions expect to be followed?"

"You are close. You forgot that although formal structures have been established, the most powerful are the ones that have existed since the dawn of humanity - the informal, implied ones, with no agreement on paper, that prop up every family, friend circle, club, organization, and clique, as well as the factions within them. These are the ones that are the most relevant."

"How? Surely they are not as important? Conventions have absolutely no binding power, and they cannot fine, jail, or execute anyone."

"Sometimes, physical consequences, even the ultimate consequence of death, are preferable to social consequences. Socrates allowed himself to be killed to give himself the image of one who stood by the truth. Seppuku was done because it was preferable to dishonoring one's family and bloodline. Even now, there are some people who commit suicide because the alternative would be to endure a lifetime of ostracism. Therefore, the non-institutional laws are the most powerful, as even though they cannot directly punish rule-breakers, their inherent legitimacy among the people's psyche elevates them above institutional laws."

"So you're saying that these de facto laws are to be followed until the new civilization is established?"

“You have guessed correctly, but I still need to give you a few pieces of instruction. Firstly, the vast majority of the populace only engages in this system subconsciously. You and the followers of the doctrine are to consciously observe and interact with the system to actively increase your prestige in every group, be it family, circle, organization, or institution. Secondly, as with all the lower levels of desire, you are to constantly monitor yourselves, to make sure none of you ever get addicted to the Great Game, and prepare for the establishment of the new system and hierarchy in the place of the old one upon the establishment of your own civilization.”

“Your second point seems straightforward, as it is obvious to me given what you have previously said. However, your first point confuses me. What do you mean that the populace does not consciously engage? Even in my school, I have witnessed my classmates discussing how to best game the system to their advantage, asking for advice in making and breaking connections, and talking about their stress when they are in a disadvantageous position.”

“People use words all the time, yet almost no one pays attention to linguistics. If asked to describe the mechanics of their native language, most people will be unable to do so meaningfully, despite being fully fluent in it. In the same manner, nearly all who engage in the system do not truly understand it. All they do is follow their instincts and do whatever brings them an immediate advantage in the system. That is why some call it the “rat-race”; just as rats in a maze have the sole objective of getting to the sugar cubes and are apathetic to the structure of the maze, the classmates you observed merely did what their instincts told them to in order to get to the objective, without consideration for the nature of the process.”

“So the only difference is that we are supposed to observe the structure of the maze?”

“Yes. In this society, you need sugar cubes to survive, regardless of whether you like it or not. If you are able to see the maze’s structure clearly, you can get many times the amount of cubes as your opponents. Just don’t develop an attachment to the cubes, or you won’t fare very well once you finally break out.”

“That sounds like something these Internet money gurus would say. Work hard and get some cash, then move to a resort somewhere and rot the rest of your life away.”

"The difference is that they are still in the maze. They still rely on their cash to sustain their lifestyle even after the start of their degeneracy. If all their money suddenly became useless, they will not be able to sustain it anymore. You will not be focused on gaining wealth, but power, which is far more resilient. Once you have gained enough followers, you will not escape solo, but en masse. After that, you will establish your own civilization, which will, for the most part, be self-sufficient. This way, you will have truly exited the matrix, at least to the most extent that it could be done on Earth. Of course, true exit is impossible in material life, but for now, this will be good enough. Am I clear now?"

"Not perfectly, but I understand."

"Good. Now I can explain to you the mechanics of the maze. As you know, the unofficial laws are the most prominent in society, but it is more important to understand the unofficial groups that create these laws."

"Aren't these laws just wholly accepted by entire civilizations? There's no groups that create them."

"Even in this one statement, you are already contradicting yourself. A civilization is a group in itself."

"What?"

"A civilization functions as its own group, or if it's more convenient to think of it that way, a faction within the world. I'm not talking about countries here. Nations and empires rise and fall, but the nature of a civilization withstands the test of time. Rome fell one and a half millennia ago, but Europe still carries on the spirit of Rome today. Just look at the EU's insignias if you want proof."

"So a civilization is unofficial?"

"Of course. There's no one who controls a civilization, only academics and historians who record them and their course. In a similar manner, there are smaller groups within civilizations that create laws for themselves. Just as a civilization is a faction within the world, there are different factions within a civilization, each with their own laws and protocols. Political movements, religions, ideologies, ideas, and cultures, as well as the smaller local cultural and ideological climate, and even down to the basic unit of friend circle and family."

"This is beginning to sound like the "intersectionality" that is being promoted within Western academia."

"The difference is that my doctrine does not root for the struggle of any faction. All factions are equally complicit in the competition for the throne. Just look at the Rwandan genocide. Today's slave can become tomorrow's tyrant."

"What difference does that slight change in doctrine make?"

"Intersectionality gives moral superiority to whatever faction it deems to be the underdog. You, in contrast, will treat every faction the same: a way to gain prestige and influence in the short term, and an enemy in the long term."

"Okay then. How do I do this?"

"You must first understand how the factions operate. I know you've read a bit on sociology, yes?"

"I'm far from being an authority on it, but I have, a little bit."

"Then you will know that from childhood, people are indoctrinated into joining the faction that is the most dominant in their life, or the one that is the most convenient for them to join based on their personal situation. Initially, it is because it is to their benefit, but eventually, their mind is so absorbed into it, even to the point where they consciously know it is bad to stay in the faction, but cannot bring themselves to get out. They will likely remain in the faction until they die in these cases."

"People definitely don't stick around with their school clique until they die."

"When you graduate, you "die" in the sense that it becomes permanently impossible for you to interact with the environment of the school, just as after actual death, one is permanently unable to interact with the world. In this sense, school life is a microcosm of life as a whole. It is a practice for forming and joining factions in the adult world."

"Anything else I need to know?"

"Within a faction, there are those who compete for prestige. All aspire for the position of highest influence, even those who know it is impossible for them to reach that position."

"Why so?"

"It is part of the addiction."

"And you're telling me to do the same thing?"

"Stop asking me the same question. You already know that the answer is yes."

“But how? I’m not charismatic enough.”

“That’s not my concern, but yours.”

“But you said I didn’t need charisma to spread the teachings.”

“You don’t, but you do if you want to give your teachings a fighting chance, a chance to gain prominence in the world’s landscape. There is no difficulty in finding like-minded people, but when the task is to elevate the position of your group of like-minded people, charisma comes into play. You wouldn’t want to be a stay of oddball nerds forever, would you?”

“I guess not. How do I do that, then?”

“I cannot tell you. Find out for yourself.”

“Why can’t you just tell me?”

“Remember that I am only a concept, and your mind’s imagination projected me into the form of a person. Since you don’t know anything about gaining status, I can’t tell you anything when you interact with my concept and ask me to tell you how to gain status.”

“But you told me this entire set of theories.”

“That is only because you already have them in your heart, but your conscious mind did not know them yet.”

“How come my heart has all of these theories, but not any knowledge about gaining status?”

“It’s just because, to put it bluntly, you don’t have charisma.”

“What do I do then?”

“Do your own research. Read books on psychology and sociology, and then develop your own plan. Before we depart, there is one more thing I can and need to tell you, and that is about the fifth level of desire, the so-called “self-actualization”. I don’t think I need to explain much.”

“I remember you said that it was the stage of desire that I, personally, needed to get past.”

“I think that after this encounter, you will not cling to the desire anymore.”

“Why not?”

“Let me show you.”

It took a few seconds for my eyes to adjust to the light. I had forgotten how long we stayed inside the control room with little light.

When I was able to see, I saw that I was again standing in the city of my dreams, the first place Monad had brought me to after we had met.

There were two key differences: one, every building was white, as well as the clothes of all the people who were walking in the streets, and two, about a kilometer away from where I was standing, there stood a white obelisk. It was extraordinarily tall; I could not guess its height, as I had never seen any building that tall before.

“What is that thing?”

“That represents the difference between the dreams you had before to the dreams you have now.”

“What do you mean? What dreams do I have now?”

“I’ll tell you in full when we get there. For now, think about it.”

We began walking towards the obelisk.

I remembered how he told me about the trapping of consciousness in the material world. That all worlds were, in essence, hell. That freedom is a finite yet uncountable distance away.

“My dream is to be freed from the world.”

“Very good. And what is the only way to do this?”

“Collaborate with others who have the same thoughts, form a new civilization, and install in everyone the determination to escape and the confidence that it can be done.”

“And what was your original goal?”

“To gain recognition for the distinction between me and most other people, to be seen as superior, and to be remembered after death.”

“And what is the difference between the two dreams?”

"I don't think there's much, honestly. The former's fulfillment pretty much mandates the latter's."

"But now, you have a clear way of realizing your previous dream. And it won't be for vanity, but with an actual purpose in mind."

"Didn't you say I have to give up my goal of self-actualization for the pursuit of transcendence? Why are you letting me keep my old goal and incorporate it into the new?"

"Do you still want to do it for recognition and fame after death though?"

I thought for a moment. "Yes, I do. I still want to prove myself as different from the people in my life. I know it's my ego and I can't help it."

"Ironically, if you keep thinking like that, you will have more in common with the people around you."

"How?"

"Don't you realize that's what everyone wants? At least, it's what everyone who's gotten past the first four stages wants."

"Surely they don't all have the goal of having their legacy immortalized?"

"Yes, they do. A legacy is not only a name and image, but also deeds, accomplishments, wealth, and bloodline. These are the things desired because they add to a person's legacy, even if their name and image are not remembered."

"But these things are meaningless. Of course I know I have a great-great-great-great-grandfather, but I do not and will never know his name and appearance. Of course I know someone built my house, but I neither know nor care about their life, or even whether they are alive or dead."

"Neither does anyone care about some obscure 19th-century photograph, nor a name written in a centuries-old archive. Yet they do about the ones who built the Pyramids or the Colosseum, despite their names and likenesses having been forgotten. The medium of legacy does not matter as much as the magnitude."

"What is your point?"

"You are no different than any of them when you seek legacy. Whether by name or deed, it is the same."

“So what makes me different now?”

“Now you know that everyone is inhabited by the same consciousness, and any deed or name is attributed to the same consciousness alone. Once you let this message sink in, your desire of accomplishment for the self will disappear, replaced by the desire of accomplishment for the one consciousness, the accomplishment of ascension.”

“And that’s the realization one needs to have in order to overcome the fifth level of desire?”

“Yes. Accomplishment is not bad. In fact, it is the only thing that drives society. Without it, humanity would still be hunter-gatherers. But with accomplishment comes the danger of ego, and ego leads to stagnation at the level of accomplishment.”

“But how do I prove the nature of consciousness to those who are seeking to break free from the fifth level of desires? You have told me that it is possible to get the message through meditating on one’s consciousness, but what about those who are unable to do so? How do I prove that there is only a single consciousness to them?”

“You don’t need to.”

“Why don’t I?”

“This is the same as the argument against solipsism that I have told you about. Do you need to prove that reality is not a machine simulation?”

“Not really.”

“Why not?”

“It’s pointless to assume it is. Nothing will ever be done with that mindset. Even if reality is a simulation, it’s better to treat it as if it’s not, as you would be more productive that way.”

“Exactly. And in a similar fashion, it’s better to assume there’s only one consciousness in all of existence than multiple. Do you know why?”

“I think your point has something to do with altruism. By having the theory that one consciousness is inhabiting everyone, there is a motivation to end the suffering of others, as it would also be one’s own. It’s like karma, but without the component of superstition.”

“Correct. As I have told you, some people wonder whether everyone else are mere husks without consciousness. In practice, there is little difference between everyone else being soulless husks and everyone else having different consciousnesses inhabiting them, as either way, one’s own consciousness is not affected by the suffering of others. Besides, there’s no meaningful way to distinguish between the two, as one cannot attain the viewpoint of the consciousnesses of others.”

“And what about proving that there is something beyond material accomplishment, that there is a way to escape the clutches of reality?”

“Same thing. If you assume there to be no escape, and existence in this world of suffering to be eternal, there is not much you can do except for cry until you shrivel up. Even if there is no escape, assuming there is gives you a sense of purpose that is, although false, still better than the goal of leaving behind a legacy, which for sure has no point except for satisfying the intellectual instinct.”

“And what do I do after I explain all of that to them?”

“When one realizes all of this, they will realize the pointlessness of self-actualization for the sake of itself, and start to use it for its true purpose, helping their consciousness.”

“But you said that it was impossible for the true purpose to be fulfilled in the current civilization.”

“Which is why I’ve been telling you to make a new one. This is how you will carry out altruism, the third of the three points of ascension. Up until that point, altruism was thought to be the aiding of individual others, which is always temporary. However, I will now tell you the way to make your altruism permanent, by aiding in the construction of the next civilization, which will not die as individual people do. Ah, we have arrived at the obelisk. Follow me.”

As we approached the obelisk, an automatic door at its base slid open to reveal an elevator.

He stepped inside. “Come on in.”

After I stepped in, the doors closed behind me. Without any warning sign, the elevator shot up. I stumbled, but Monad grabbed my arm and helped me back to my feet.

After about a minute, we arrived at the top. The doors opened to reveal a viewing platform.

“Step outside and look.”

I stepped onto the platform and looked down at the city below. I saw that all of the white buildings were laid out in a perfect gridlike pattern.

There were a few people, clothed in white, walking along the streets, but I noticed one difference between this city and the one in my previous vision that I did not notice before: the complete lack of individual cars. Instead, numerous buses drove across the horizontal and vertical lanes. There were no traffic lights; instead, the buses coordinated their movements perfectly to avoid obstructing or colliding with each other.

I noticed that most of the buildings had a uniform design and height. There were a few buildings that were taller than the rest, but they were placed in certain intervals.

“Why do you want me to look at this?”

“All of this is possible.”

“Where is this city supposed to be?”

“Right now, it is only in your imagination. But you can manifest it if you wish.”

“It’s impossible. All the world has already been settled. I can’t just be like the Mormons and settle some sparsely populated, stateless territory.”

“I have already told you. There are still a lot of places that are suitable for habitation, yet uninhabited or sparsely populated.”

“Yes, but they are claimed by established nations.”

“The key is they are “claimed”, not “controlled”. The Mormon settlement of Utah was done in that circumstance.”

“One, the United Nations exists now, and they will impose heavy pressure against any attempt at the establishment of a new state. Two, it is far easier to move armies nowadays, and any unwelcome visitors in a country can easily be dealt with.”

“Again, I have already explained it to you previously. You are saying this with the assumption that the local authorities are going to react negatively to your presence. There is no reason for you to not make peace with them.”

“You think they are going to tolerate foreigners building a city on their territory?”

“Why not? They tolerate international corporations building infrastructure in and transporting foreign workers into their country. Some even allow foreign military bases to operate.”

“But that is because it enriches their wealth and power. They have an incentive to let foreigners operate solely because it is beneficial to them.”

“Then be beneficial to them. Give them a portion of the profits you make, help them remain in power, and provide them the resources necessary to prevent opposition to their rule from taking shape.”

“You want me to support dictators?”

“Have you already forgotten about *realpolitik*?”

“I guess if that’s what I have to do, that’s what I shall do. But even if the location for the city is planned out, how will I convince people to take part in the project? There is no superstitious promise of a good afterlife, or a good life at all, in fact. Even if the theory is true, people will be toiling with no end in sight, with no benefit except for in the far-off future, after billions of lifetimes of effort, and then being spawned into a different universe to simply do it all over again.”

“Is there anything better for them to do?”

“There isn’t?”

“For most of people’s lives, there is, or at least an illusion of it. However, most people have the realization of pointlessness at least once in their lives. For some, it occurs in their teenage years, for some, in early adulthood, for some, around their midlife crisis, and for some yet, near the end of their lives. When that happens, it is a window of opportunity to tell them the theory.”

“But how is the theory superior to being recruited into religion or dark subcultures?”

“For the rational thinker, superstition is not going to be anything compared to your provable theory, and wearing all black and listening to depressing music is going to be even less logical.”

“But what is the point of doing something for a googolth of the progress towards nirvana, when they could be enjoying life?”

“When the realization occurs, life no longer becomes enjoyable. All the friends, family, money, partying, achievements, and projects they have will become meaningless to them. When that happens, they will be inclined to

seek anything that even has a chance of being meaningful, and when they read your theory, even though they know the road is incomprehensibly long with no end in sight, walking is still better than sitting down and crying.”

“But what if one day, my theory is proven false?”

“Undoubtedly it will. Your brain is a flawed, biased, and imperfect vessel, and some of the things in this theory will eventually be proven false. But until then, it is a good enough framework to hold the ones who see the darkness of reality together in an effort to seek the light until the hard problems of existence, consciousness, and purpose are solved scientifically, at which point a new theory will take over.”

“Will my theory become useless?”

“Of course. The theory of spontaneous generation has now been proven false in favor of germ theory, but while it was still thought to be true, people preserved their food and threw away anything that was left out for too long, and that prevented a lot of illnesses and deaths. Just because a theory will eventually become obsolete doesn’t mean it’s not useful. The candle was eventually replaced with the lightbulb, but it was still a valuable source of light for its time.”

“But what is the motivation for people to follow the path now? In the far future, it will be much easier to progress on the path, and people could just enjoy their current lives in the present era.”

“Most will undoubtedly think that way. This is why, when they have the realization, they will push it to the back of their mind, try to forget it, and continue with their life. But for the ones who are diligent enough to persist in the quest for the truth, they will see the value in walking along the path, so that it may be easier for others in the future to do so.”

“Easier? So it won’t even be necessary?”

“The original sects of the early Christians died out, but their ideas were eventually able to push Europe out of the Dark Age. Even if all the members of your movement die out, the ideas will still linger. A single bullet can kill a human, but an idea cannot be killed. Even the books the authorities of old tried to censor, archaeologists have dug up. Even if all of you die, you will serve as an example to future generations of truth-seekers.”

“You still haven’t answered my question. We won’t be necessary for future generations?”

"No one is necessary. If Euclid never existed, someone else would just discover geometry. However, he made it easier for future generations, saving them centuries of time. In the same manner, even if you don't succeed, you will save future generations plenty of precious time and give them a head start.

"But will people really be willing to give up their families, friends, work, and everything they know just to aid in the construction of something that will not be completed within their lifetime?"

"In the beginning of the movement, it will be very hard. You will not have a stable political or economic structure, and very few will be brave enough to take part. But when you establish a stable civilization, those who are unsatisfied with their current life can move there. As I have said before, those who are attached to the factions they belong to are just as stuck in the material trap as drug addicts."

"Isn't it cultish though, having people abandon the entirety of what they've lived for up to that point?"

"That's what the Catholic and Theravada monks did too, but no one calls Catholicism or Theravada Buddhism cults."

"But they are just a small minority of the population entire population of adherents to the faith. Most adherents still have families and lead lives almost identical to non-adherents."

"That is only because at the time, families were necessary because traditional sexual reproduction was the only way to perpetuate a civilization. Now, IVF exists, and cloning is around the corner. Families can now be replaced with a more efficient unit of social organization."

"What about friends?"

"People cut off their entire circle of old friends all the time. When they graduate high school or university, when they get a new job, or when they move to a different location. Becoming a follower of the theory is no different."

"Will there be people who are willing to do all of these tasks though?"

"There will. I guarantee you will find them, as long as you play the game strategically. I will leave it up to you to establish the civilization I have revealed to you. Even if you fail, someone else will do it in your place. It is inevitable."

"You still haven't told me the specifics of the civilization you told me to establish. Which political or economic model will I use? How do I organize governance and hierarchy? Where do I get all the resources to start my civilization in the first place?"

"I'll leave all of that up to you to find out. You're very intelligent, and I have no doubt you will be able to do some research and decide on the most optimal model. Remember, *realpolitik* is key. It doesn't matter what system or strategy you use, as long as it furthers you along the path to the eventual goal of finding an escape from the universe. When you have researched further, and perhaps recruited a few people, I will meet you again and provide you with further instructions. Good luck."

Without a word of warning, his form began to transform into white lines, as if he was becoming a sketch figure. The lines then folded themselves back up into the inscribed circle that he originally took the form of.

I shouted: "Wait! I still have more things to ask you!", but the circular pattern was already fading, and soon it was no longer visible. I was standing all alone on the viewing platform.

Before I could think of what to do, the obelisk began to tremble. The platform I was standing on shook so hard that I fell to my knees.

I panicked, but I didn't have much time to do anything. The tower began to collapse, and I was falling along with it.

I woke up lying on a bed. There were fluorescent lights glowing above me. I was moving; I recognized that I was in an ambulance.

My stomach pulsed in pain, and I vomited blood.

Epilogue

After spending a few days in the hospital, and a few more in a mental treatment facility, I was allowed to go back home.

I knew I had to write down what I had witnessed, but I did not have much motivation to do so. There was still the constant pressure of schoolwork, and I put it into the back of my mind, exactly what Monad had warned me against.

Only two years later, when I was sixteen, when I was faced with the increasingly relevant prospect of having to go to university, get a white-collar job, and live a life of no value, did I realize I needed to start writing, as it was now or never.

After two months of writing, even while I was still in school, I finished my work. I had just turned seventeen.

I have named my theory "Veritanism". It is not a political, philosophical, religious, or metaphysical theory, but one that directly addresses the problems all ultimately seek to solve.

This book is the first of many, and there will be more books to come.

I will probably be wrong on a lot of things, as I am still learning and contemplating, but maybe you can join me, and we can work to try to solve the three hard problems of existence, consciousness, and purpose, and seek the truth together.

Do you accept my invitation?

If you do, I will see you then.

Future planned books, a more in-depth explanation of my theory and ideology,
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